

Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. This hardly represents the intended outcome of Vojinović's deliberate and measured efforts to "direct attention to the future, as it was seen by historical actors in the past, thereby opening up space for new and important questions" (p. 25).

Still, the matter presents an opportunity to further examine the problems of contemporary interpretations of the unification of South Slavs. Following Vojinović's contention that the year 1918 was regarded as *annus mirabilis* in Yugoslav historiography, one might argue that today, this stance has been effectively reversed. In fact, prevailing accounts of the Yugoslav state in Serbian scholarship could be viewed through the lens of *annus horribilis*, a year of disasters. In contrast to the singularity of *annus mirabilis*, the notion of *annus horribilis* unfolds within a polarity. It contains both 1918 and 1991. From the outlook of 1918, it illustrates the mistakes and failures that led to the unification of the Yugoslav state, with catastrophic consequences; from the outlook of 1991, it portrays the blunders and calamities that caused and followed its disintegration. In both instances, the antinomy Šišić ran into seemingly endures. Yet, epistemological conditions of current ways of articulating the past have been transformed. Vojinović's use of the concept of presentism in the above-mentioned essay can be examined to reveal the changed circumstances. He follows François Hartog's idea that the term should be understood as "the sense that only the present exists, a present characterized at once by the tyranny of an instant and by the treadmill of an unending now" (*Regimes of Historicity. Presentism and Experiences of Time*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015, p. xv). But this absence of the future, woven into our regime of historicity, is a distinct feature of the contemporary neoliberal order. As the French scholar notes, "there is something specific about our present" (Ibid., p. xviii). Historians living and working throughout the existence of the Yugoslav state were firmly anchored in a different regime of historicity and the assumptions it imposed on their scientific models. At the current conjuncture, however, as Hartog observes, "the crisis of the future unsettled

our idea of progress and produced a sense of foreboding that cast a shadow over our present" (Ibid., p. 196). The past could not escape this shadow—it has obediently surrendered to the reign of a futureless present. Amidst such circumstances, one might turn to the scholar who first articulated a comprehensive understanding of this profound cultural transformation and its connection to broader social development. As American literary critic Frederic Jameson points out: "There is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, everything is 'in the last analysis' political" (*The Political Unconscious. Narrative As a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981, p. 20). This is the vantage point from which scholars ought to orient themselves in order to advance their understanding of Yugoslavia's history. In doing so, they should tread carefully with texts capable of seamlessly reaching across time to persuade their readers. Many in *Vizije budućnosti* are precisely of that nature.

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Biljana Vučetić, *In the Name of Humanity. The American Red Cross in Serbia, 1914–1920–1922*, Beograd: Istorijski institut, 2023, 258 pages.
(Biljana Vučetić, *U ime humanosti. Američki Crveni krst u Srbiji, 1914–1920–1922*, Beograd: Istorijski institut, 2023, 258 str. (Serbian Cyrillic)).

Over the past few decades, the history of international relations has undergone a notable transformation. In response to calls for the "internationalization" of international history, scholars have gradually moved beyond the confines of methodological nationalism, which had long served as the dominant analytical framework in the field. Rather than maintaining a somewhat narrow focus on inter-state diplomacy, the so-called "transnational turn" in historiography has advocated for an expanded scope of inquiry that encompasses a broader array

of actors and processes operating across national boundaries. This reorientation has drawn historians' attention to the role of various non-state participants in international affairs, including multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, global movements, and networks of individuals. It sought to examine their activities not only through the traditional concerns of high diplomacy, such as war and peace, economic relations, state borders, and security, but also by engaging with a range of issues directly or indirectly related to international relations, including food, health, migration, and demography.

This framework did not aim to marginalize the role of state actors. Rather, its purpose was to situate them within the broader network of international forces and analyze how the complex interactions between state and non-state entities shaped the historical development of international relations. Reflecting this shift, monograph *Uime humanosti. Američki Crveni krst u Srbiji, 1914–1920–1922*, authored by Biljana Vučetić, principal research fellow at the Institute of History in Belgrade, offers a compelling contribution to the field. Building on prior research on this subject, most notably conducted by earlier generations of historians such as Dragoljub Živojinović and Ubavka Ostojić-Fejić, Vučetić's book opens new perspectives and advances our understanding of the history of American-Serbian relations. Emphasizing that "the humanitarian aspect can contribute to a different understanding of the relations between the two countries," during and immediately after the First World War (p. 7), the author centers her narrative on the activities of the American Red Cross (ARC) in Serbia. Through this focus, she seeks to provide readers with "an engaging and valuable perspective on international relations" by introducing new actors whose role encompasses both social and political dimensions (p. 7).

The ARC was founded in 1881 as a private humanitarian organization and operated as a subsection of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). However, Vučetić does not frame the ARC's activities through the lens of its participation in the international humanitarian structures. Instead, she seeks to situate its

undertakings within the broader context of American foreign policy objectives during the First World War. A significant influence shaping this perspective is the research of American historian Julia F. Irwin, whom the author highlights as the "alpha and omega" of current scholarship on the ARC (p. 8). Comprehensively elaborated in her book *Making the World Safe: The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Irwin portrays the international role of the ARC as a complex instrument that simultaneously reflected and advanced American political and ideological expansion in the early 20th century. The ARC was uniquely positioned for such a role, she argues. While one of its responsibilities, aligned with the ICRC's mission, was to provide neutral wartime assistance to soldiers, its mandate was eventually expanded to include aid to civilians affected by natural disasters and episodes of political and social upheaval, both within the U.S. and abroad. Moreover, although the ARC began as a privately funded institution, it gradually evolved into a quasi-official arm of the U.S. government, maintaining close personal and financial ties to both the White House and the U.S. Department of State. As a result, the ARC played an important part in American foreign policy during the First World War by promoting stability, enhancing the nation's international image, and facilitating the dissemination of American values.

The understanding of the ARC as both a reflection and a tool of the U.S. foreign policy informs Vučetić's own approach. As she argues, "American humanitarian activities were never completely altruistic, neutral, or apolitical; rather, humanitarian aid was part of a diplomatic and military agenda" (p. 17). Accordingly, she maintains it could be argued that "the ultimate goal of the ARC's humanitarians was to ensure economic, and consequently social, stability" (p. 64). Nonetheless, Vučetić's detailed reconstruction of the ARC's work in Serbia during the war and early postwar years places less emphasis on the organization's intertwining with the political interests of the American state and instead highlights its practical work on the ground. She

explores the numerous challenges and complexities encountered by the ARC's humanitarian efforts in war-ravaged Serbia, beginning with the deployment of the initial medical units in the autumn of 1914 and continuing with the Sanitary Commission's critical intervention in 1915 to combat the devastating typhus epidemic. The account then turns to the ARC's operations in northern Serbia under Austro-Hungarian occupation, culminating in the organization's forced withdrawal from the occupied territories at the beginning of 1917 and its subsequent relocation to Thessaloniki, where a newly formed unit dedicated to agricultural improvement projects soon joined the mission.

The signing of the Armistice shifted the focus of the ARC's activities in Europe from mostly military-related relief to assisting the civilian population. As Vučetić observes, its efforts to alleviate the social challenges confronting the war-torn continent were closely aligned with the official aims of the American administration, particularly within the context of the looming Bolshevik threat (p. 61). During the autumn of 1918, with the ARC's operations in Serbia reorganized within the newly established Balkan Commission, the scope of their activities expanded. Although medical care remained the cornerstone of its mission, the ARC's Commission to Serbia broadened its efforts to include a diverse array of initiatives that touched the lives of countless individuals, ranging from the provision of essential supplies and services and the implementation of comprehensive educational programs to the establishment of sewing workshops and the dedicated care of war orphans. These activities were carried out in an atmosphere of latent political tensions among the Balkan states, which further complicated the already fragile transport routes and distribution infrastructure. Some of the difficulties were caused by events far beyond Serbia's borders, such as the arrival of large numbers of refugees following the disintegration of the Tsarist armies during the Russian Civil War. Additionally, the presence of multiple humanitarian missions operating simultaneously added another layer of complexity, as the Commission for Serbia sought

to give practical form to a unified and coherent relief effort. Following the formal cessation of the Commission's activities in September 1920, the ARC maintained a presence in Serbia for two more years through the Serbian Child Welfare Association, which it continued to support financially. Through this organization, the ARC sustained its commitment to reform efforts in the areas of healthcare, education, and child welfare in Serbia well beyond the formal conclusion of the First World War.

As *U ime humanosti* predominantly centers on the ARC's humanitarian work in Serbia at the grassroots level, shaped and often complicated by its interactions with local authorities and communities, Vučetić offers a rich and nuanced account of the organization's field operations and the challenges it encountered. Her detailed portrayal also provides valuable insights into the lives of numerous individuals who played key roles in these efforts, as well as their accounts of a Serbian state devastated by the wartime collapse of its economic, educational, and healthcare systems. Consequently, tracing the evolving trajectory of the ARC's engagement in Serbia, from the initial military relief missions in 1914 to the postwar initiatives aimed at implementing various social reform programs, subtly reinforces the underlying premise that American humanitarian aid during this period was far from a purely altruistic endeavor or marginal to the overarching objectives of the U.S. Rather, it served as a strategic instrument that merged humanitarian concerns and genuine efforts to alleviate suffering and rebuild affected societies with broader political and economic interests. One such example is Balkan Commissioner Lieutenant Colonel Henry Anderson's proposal to partner with Serbian state institutions in creating an educational system for war orphans, with selected students subsequently advancing to American universities and being groomed to assume prominent roles within their nation's entrepreneurial elite (p. 109). Yet few representatives of the ARC in Serbia explicitly articulated this convergence of humanitarian and strategic aims. It could be argued that this stemmed less from deliberate avoidance of the

topic than from a limited awareness among the ARC's personnel regarding their role within the broader contours of American foreign policy, an awareness that, even when present, was often obscured by the practical demands and moral imperatives of their humanitarian work. In either case, it is evident that the strategic dimensions of their activities were not absent, but rather implicitly embedded in the structure and logic of their missions, shaped by the progressive-era ideals of the time, and therefore did not require explicit articulation or conscious pursuit. Still, this in no way detracts from the book's central thesis or its thorough and insightful reconstruction of the key developments in the ARC's humanitarian work in Serbia during the First World War. Taken together, these qualities make Biljana Vučetić's work a significant and valuable contribution both to the historiography of American-Serbian relations and the field of international history.

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